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HUMANITARIAN AND DISASTER ASSISTANCE

More ‘Reming’ survivors in Bicol get new houses

By Jaymee T. Gamil
Daraga, Albay

ALTHOUGH “REMING” STRUCK Albay more than a year ago, nongovernment agencies continue to help rebuild the lives of families left homeless by the super typhoon.

In Daraga town, the Habitat for Humanity turned over 53 completed houses at the Barangay Anislag Resettlement Site to the displaced residents of Barangay Binitayan, in the same town.

“They were so happy they were crying. They worked hard for this day,” Oliver Coronado, Habitat’s vice president for internal affairs in Bicol, said.

Another 350 families were given assurance of permanent shelter during the groundbreaking ceremonies in Camalig town by the International Organization for Migration (IOM), which is funded by the US Agency for International Development (USAID).

Fifty more houses will be turned over in Naga City in Camarines Sur, Coronado said.

Construction of the 53 houses was funded by Compassion International Bicol Rehabilitation Program, which pledged to build 625 houses during the Bicol Express Caravan in September last year. The caravan, sponsored by NGOs and mounted by volunteers from Bicol and Manila, aimed to build 2,000 shelters in Anislag.

A shelter unit, brightly colored and measuring 30 square meters, costs P70,000. It has concrete walls and steel frames that allow a second-floor expansion.

THE HOUSES
that will be
built in this
resettlement
area in
Barangay
Tagaytay,
Camalig,
Albay, will be
awarded to
some 350
families
displaced by
Supertyphoon
"Reming."

PHOTOS BY
NIÑO JESUS ORBETA



Habitat has committed to build around 350 more core-shelter units in Camalig and in Libmanan, Camarines Sur, in an agreement it signed with the Department of Social Welfare and Development.

Around P10 million has already been allocated for the project, which will take six months to finish, Coronado said.

Permanent houses

In Camalig, Laura Coughlin, USAID disaster relief officer, said the 350 displaced families would be able to start new lives with the IOM-USAID shelter project. "They have been in limbo for a long time," she said during the groundbreaking rites.

Camalig was one of the towns hard-hit by mudslides when "Reming" dislodged debris from the slopes of Mayon Volcano. Families were moved to tents and transit shelters.

Located in upland Sitio Batawon, the Barangay Tagaytay Resettlement Project can accommodate up to 1,000 16-sqm shelters, each occupying an 18-sqm lot. "The walls and roofs will be fully made of concrete, ensuring that the shelters are hazard-resistant," Rex Alamban, IOM-Bicol project manager, said.

The IOM is set to complete a total of 907 permanent houses and five community centers across Albay and Camarines Sur, through a \$3.5-million donation from the USAID.

The two agencies also tied up with the humanitarian organization Save the Children Foundation, which will provide the community centers and livelihood assistance projects in the resettlement sites.

Coughlin praised the folk tradition of "bayanihan" (mutual aid) in the construction of houses in Tagaytay. The site was identified by the provincial government, the roads and utilities built by the municipal government and the National Housing Authority, and the beneficiaries named by the DSWD.



ABOUT 250 families in Guinobatan, Albay get galvanized iron sheets and nails to be used in reconstructing their houses that were damaged by Supertyphoon Reming in November 2006.

(Source: Philippine Daily Inquirer, 1/31/08, page A14)